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ABSTRACT

This paper reflects the feelings, efforts, difficulties, and frustrations of an education professor who re-examined his attempts to develop an approach to pedagogy that is autobiographical, dialogical, and collaborative, in which the curriculum is built around students' experiences and centered on student voice. The experiences recounted focus on a course entitled "Advanced Child Development for Teachers," a university requirement for inservice teachers studying for their master's degree. The primary goal of the course was that students would come to terms with the possibility of learning as a constructivist process that includes the active participation of the learner in the process of meaning-making. A second goal was that the teachers become conscious of themselves as teacher-researchers, rather than as passive recipients of received wisdom about pedagogy. The classroom was intended to foster a nurturing environment; the assignments included a reflective dialogue journal. The paper presents excerpts from the journals of both students and professor. The excerpts reveal the difficulties involved in developing a self-reflexive pedagogy and the professor's feelings of failure and inadequacy. (JD)

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Self-reflexive pedagogy: A narrative inquiry

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I wish to express my deepest and most profound gratitude to the eleven students who shared their lives with me during the course of the experiences described in this paper. To protect their privacy, I cannot publicly acknowledge their contribution, but it is no less because of that. I am deeply grateful to all of them for permission to proceed with the public presentation of these ideas, which I have done here in the hope that others can learn from my mistakes. I would also like to express appreciation to my colleague Janet Miller of Hofstra University. In the course of co-teaching the First Summer Institute for Teachers at Hofstra University in the summer of 1990 I learned much from Janet about listening to teachers' voices and stories. That learning has greatly influenced the narrrative presented here.

Introduction

In writng this paper I am drawn for a third time to retelling a teaching story which poses in stark form both the multiple realities and dialectical contradictions of teaching and the painfully slow progression toward self-reflexivity in my own teaching. This is a humbling story for me to tell because it highlights some of the glaring insensitivities in my pedagogy, and because I still experience considerable ambiguity and uncertainty in trying to draw conclusions about the success of my efforts. This has been a hard story for me to let go of. It's been eighteen months since I taught the class I will describe, and I am still struggling with the unsettling ambiguities it has presented to me.

Most of my classes meet with relative success: students generally rate the instructional experience as positive, I am usually satisfied with the outcomes, and many students maintain regular contact with me throughout their college careers and thereafter. Generally I feel valued and useful, and I derive satisfaction from the sense that I can create a safe, connected, constructivist environment. I nurture the belief that some students may go even further to develop critical insights and to experience a sense of empowerment that will enable them to critique power relations and work to remove some of the inequities of our society. I also like to have comfortable classes in which there is a general feeling of well-being,

collaboration, collegiality and nurturance among the students. During the past four years I have worked to develop an appproach to pedagogy that is autobiographical, dialogical, connected and collaborative, and in which the curriculum is built around students' experiences and centered on student voice. I feel sufficiently comfortable with my success in this area that I frequently write and speak about aspects of my pedagogy.

While much can be learned from sharing our successes, I have found that my greatest soul-searching has come from unsettling experiences that have arrested my taken-for-granted view of pedagogy and caused me to question the very fundamental tenets of my purpose. The story I wish to tell represents one of the two most unsettling pedagogical experiences I have ever experienced. I tell it today for a variety of purposes. In the first place, it is a story of the evolution of my own self-reflexivity and, as autobiography, the story may be helpful to others engaged in similar journeys. Second, the pitfalls I experienced in my teaching, despite my emerging self-reflexivity, illustrate the ease with which any pedagogical paradigm, however liberatory, can become a blinding orthodoxy which can limit the teacher's responsivenesss to students' unique biographies and histories as well as to their emergent needs. Thirdly, the story provides a dramatic illustration of the complexity of critical pedagogy. As long as we can labor under the illusion of easy pedagogical success, the

contradictions, ambiguities and dialectical tensions of pedagogy remain hidden. I believe this story will illustrate the benefits of retelling and reexamining our unsettling pedagogical experiences as a means of coming to terms with some of the real-world complexities of a process that critical educational theorists too often render unproblematic in their writings.

Finally, I should note that this paper is intended to be a narrative inquiry in the sense in which that term is used by Connelly and Clandinin (1990). Since I was originally trained in the empirical methods of behavioral and developmental psychology, the transition toward self-reflexive pedagogy has been gradually trailed by an attempt to include more narrative and self-reflexivity in my research and writing. Because of my previous socialization I have had to struggle considerably to regain my voice in these areas, and this paper represents my first attempt to write an inquiry narrative. Although I kept a journal of my class eighteen months ago, I did so merely for intuitive reasons, and it was not until I read Connelly and Clandinin's helpful synthesis that I became explicitly aware of a research genre in which I could locate my emergent research agenda. As a result, in terms of the formal requirements of a narrative study, the following paper has shortcomings, of which the gravest is the absence of a strong collaborative relationship between my students and I. The story is

still unfolding, and I will incorporate my students' responses to this version in my next restorying, but for now the narrative represents more a demonstration (see Connelly and Clandinin) of pedagogic phenomena from my interpretive perspectives, rather than the preferable collaborative construction of meaning that an inquiry narrative ought to embody. Nevertheless, I believe that this paper qualifies as narrative inquiry because it embodies my third effort at interpreting and restorying my own human experience. The first storytelling came in my recording of the actual journal as I taught the class. The second , which attempted to embody the story in a general theoretical matrix, was presented at AERA in 1990 (ms. available from author). This is the first inquiry narrative, in which rather than accept my earlier description of events at face value, I attempt to inquire into the meaning of the unsettling events that occurred from a variety of perspectives.

Narrative sketch: Context, character & setting

I taught a course entitled Advanced child development for teachers during the June-July summer session of 1989. This course is a University requirement for inservice teachers who hold provisional certification and who are studying for their master's degree in order to attain permanent state certification in elementary education. Although courses like this are

often taught in a traditional didactic format, with primary emphasis on imparting information about relevant aspects of child development, my course is different. In this, as in all my courses, I place primacy on student voice and on student involvement in the collaborative construction of meaning in a safe, connected environment. In this particular course, as the attached syllabus indicates (see Appendix I), I stated as my primary goal that students would come to terms with the possibility of learning as a constructivist process that necessarily must include the active participation of the learner in the process of meaning-making. A second goal was that the teachers become self-conscious of themselves as teacher- researchers, rather than as passive recipients of received wisdom about pedagogy. I selected three trade paperbacks as a stimulus for discussion (see Appendix I), and I prepared the attached sylllabus in which I attempted to make explicit my own philosophy of teaching.

The syllabus is typical of a format that I have been developing for some time, in that it includes an explicit statement of my desire for a collaborative, nurturing classroom environment, and in that it includes as suggested assignments a reflective dialogue journal, a philosophy of teaching, and a final assignment that I hoped would enable students to gain some ownership over these ideas and that would allow them to begin to explore the possibility of linking theoretical ideas with practice. However,

the syllabus contained two significant innovations. The first of these, representing my attempt to create an emergent curriculum, was presented in the syllabus as follows:

> This class represents a new departure for me. Typically, I give out a detailed syllabus of readings and dates at the first class meeting. However, this time I would like to experiment with creating a learning collective. I would like us to set our priorities together with respect to what we should address, and when...

While the removal of those aspects of traditional pedagogical structure embodied in specific assignments, due dates, assigned readings etc., may not seem radical, I sensed that this might prove intimidating for students and so I went on to suggest a possible path that we might consider pursuing in constructing our joint inquiry into relevant issues. The second major change I made was to introduce the possibility of autobiographical writing as an avenue toward personal exploration. This, my initial attempt at using autobiography in the classroom, was rather modest, and involved primarily out-of-class writing, rather than the mixture of in-class writing and sharing of writing, and out-of-class writing that I now prefer to use.

Eleven students, all female, enrolled in the course. Four of the students had just received their undergraduate degrees. These students

were in their early twenties, and had an average of less than one year's teaching experience apiece. The remaining seven students were in their thirties and forties. Four of these students had less than one year's teaching experience, two students had 5-6 years of teaching experience, and one student had taught for seventeen years. As is typical for summer courses, the class operated on an accelerated schedule, meeting from 10:30-12:30 five days a week for four weeks in midsummer. The physical environment of the classroom was oppressive and dreary. We met in a basement classroom, in a building with no airconditioning, during a summer in which the middday temperature was generally in the nineties, and in which the only relief came from a portable fan that I took with me to the classroom each day. The timing of the class was problematic too. For me the difficulty came from the fact that I began teaching this class each day just ten minutes after I had finished teaching another two-hour graduate class in another equally oppressive basement on campus. For students there were significant pressures from the accelerated summer schedule, and from the fact that for many of them enrollment in this course deprived them of an opportunity for rest and renewal after the completion of the school year in their regular teaching jobs.

Initially I had intended to do a reflexive case study of my teaching in both of my summer classes. The earlier class was a graduate class in

child development for preservice student teachers. Both classes had almost identical syllabi and purposes, though in practice I would expect the classes to be quite different because of the very different experiential backgrounds of the students. Twenty one students enrolled in the preservice class. In each class I took some notes during class time, and I wrote in my journal for at least an hour after class each day. By the end of the course I had thirty single-spaced pages of journal notes. In fact, the preservice class was "[illegible] to teach", and thus provided considerably less interesting material for a reflexive case study. Hence the focus in the story which follows is primarily on the events that occurred in the class with the eleven teachers. In preparation for the current restorying of the narrative I reread my journal, I studied extracts from students' journals, I examined their course evaluations and other materials they had written for and about the class, and in September 1990 I sent them a letter soliciting their current feelings on the experience they had in the class. From this corpus of material I generated another reflective journal of about 25 pages. All of the foregoing constitute the data for the current narrative inquiry.

Considering context at a deeper level, the contradictions and ambiguities that necessarily accompany attempts at teaching a required course in a traditional university program in a liberatory manner provides

a rich context within which to consider the relative sucess or failure of any given effort at teaching. The more self-reflexive I have become about my teaching, for example, the more I realize that critical teaching is predicated on an awareness of the dialectical tensions that are a constant feature of classroom life in school and university. For example, in my role as a teacher of teachers, I constantly wrestle with the tension involved in trying to introduce students to a politically informed, self-reflexive pedagogy while working within the parameters of the traditional course structures of a conventional school of education whose general orientation appears to be to produce teachers and administrators who will "fit in" in local school systems. I also wrestle with the subtleties of institutional power relations and my role in them. Recently, for example, I received copies of the students' evaluations of my classes for the past semester. I am well aware of the role which student evaluations can play in my university's decision to grant or withhold tenure. How has my awareness of the institutional uses to which positive and negative evaluations can be put by my institution colored my approach to teaching my students? Recently, too, my students opened their grade reports to see what verdict I had reached on their academic performance. How have I reconciled my absolute power to judge with my desire to create a safe and democratic classroom environment? How have students interpreted the mixed message

that the construction of critical understanding is what matters and, yet, that I will grade them on a scale from A to F, with pluses and minuses added to further refine my discriminations? Does it help matters that I reassure them that learning is what matters, and "not to worry about grades", or would it make more sense to provide clear and unambiguous evaluation criteria at the outset?

At the level of classroom interaction, the contradictions become more puzzling. For example, can I, a white male with a clearly articulated liberatory agenda for education, avoid imposition on my students, most of whom are female and relatively unempowered, and many of whom come to my classes seeking no more than the technical information they believe they need to allow schools to continue as they are? Is it possible for me, given my own oppressions and the oppressions of my students, to engage in nonhierarchical and nonimpositional teaching? Indeed, in view of the authority granted teachers to assign and evaluate, is it a contradiction to speak of teaching as a nonhierarchical and nonimpositional process? The ultimate dilemma comes in the definition of success: Should I define success for my students? On what terms? Is it impositional for me to expect a certain "level" of success? Is it possible to think of teaching

without construing success in terms of some hierarchy that discriminates students demonstrating advancement from those who do not? All of these interacting contradictions and circumstances are germane to my assessment of the outcome of the teaching story I am about to tell.

Finally, what follows is a select retelling of a story. In deciding what to focus on, I have chosen to select those incidents that forced me to confront contradictions in my own teaching. Much of the story will be told and critiqued from my perspective as teacher, researcher and critic. This is because the study was not originally conceptualized as a collaborative and jointly constructed process. However, the students will have the final word, as the narrative concludes with students speaking in their own voices about the course. Absent from the narrative is any clear picture of the exchanges that occurred on a daily basis during classroom dialogue. This omission is due in part to the fact that the sessions were not taperecorded, and in part to my judgment that access to these exchanges is not central to the story presented here.

Stories and narrative I: "I" as teacher, researcher, critic

July 10 - 'Unintentional decontextualization '

Typically I now begin my classes with autobiographical writing and sharing in order to promote a sense of connectedness and community and in

order to enable students to begin their inquiry by telling their own stories. Eighteen months ago, in my desire to establish some baseline information against which growth might be assessed, I began differently. I asked students to respond in writing to a series of questions probing their conceptions of teaching, learning and knowing. Many students later told me that this exercise, which required students to write intensely for over an hour during our first class meeting, caused students to feel the kind of stress that they normally associate with writing examinations under pressure. Ironically, the outcome was quite the inverse of what I had hoped to accomplish with my class. My journal comments on that first day clearly capture my original intention:

> I am especially interested in trying to ground the curriculum in student experience, and to genuinely serve the role of a problem poser and catalyst for critical reflection...in thinking about summer school I made a major departure from typical form, resolved to drop the formal syllabus... and introduced a significant amount of autobiographical writing.

In asking students to engage in an abstract recapitulation of their beliefs at this early stage, I succeeded in detaching them from their own biographical and historical understandings of the topic and caused them to begin to think of the issues in decontextualized and alienating terms.

July 11 - 'Resistance' or 'Imposition'?

The mistake was easily rectified in my preservice class. Next morning, when I introduced the syllabus and suggested that it might bear discussion, the students spontaneously broke up into groups and began to talk. I assumed that the same would happen in my class of teachers. To my surprise three students launched into a powerful attack on the syllabus. Their complaints focused principally on the amount of work expected, though I sensed a lot of performance anxiety too. The students who spoke were emphatic that they did not want to do "a research paper", and rejected any suggestion that the final project assignment was meant, in fact, to be anything but a research paper. Since I felt from their comments that they were just resistant to the idea of doing any work, and since it was not at all clear that they spoke for all the members of the group, I refused to back down, and suggested that they come up with proposals for alternate assignments. Those students who seemed to agree with the emphasis of the syllabus were very quiet and seemed silenced by the anger of their colleagues. A number of themes had already emerged, and these would recur in the weeks a head. First, as I noted in my journal at the time:

> My overall impression was a strong desire to gain practical things - they were happy to discuss in class, but they were very reluctant to read and write. I'm not

> exactly sure what this means and to what extent I should respond to felt needs, and to what extent I should stretch them in an intellectual direction.

While I now think that this dilemma is resolved by moving from autobiographical experiences and generative themes (Freire, 1970) to problem posing and the critical unveiling of reality, in practice the progression is not simple, and the dilemma of balancing the tensions of personal storytelling and the need at some point to move beyond that to critical reflection on reality is difficult to resolve, as I will illustrate below. Second, I began to detect a tension between the refuge these teachers sought in the certainty and unambiguity of the traditional passive learning paradigm, and my desire to introduce ambiguity and uncertainty in order to enable them to experience opportunities for the use of personal ways of knowing and for exercising their own sense of agency. In retrospect, I have no doubt that I underestimated the needs of this particular group of teachers for a trusting, safe environment, though I still feel nowhere near resolution as to how to address the interacting dialectical tension between on the one hand students' safety and security needs versus students' resistance to world-views other than their own, and on the other hand the tension between the need to foster intellectualization and critcal reflection on reality versus the danger of imposing my point of view or way of thinking on students. The wary

attitude of at least some of these students is nicely captured in the following extract from one student's journal entry of July 14:

> The first few days Michael repeatedly said he wasn't trying to trick us, but I was skeptical. He sounded a lot like Nixon when when he said 'I am not a crook'.

In summary, I had begun to encounter what critical theorists are prone to call resistance. At the time, and indeed throughout the course, I had no hesitation in labeling student reluctance as resistance. It is becoming increasingly apparent to me in retrospect, however, that this kind of resistance may be the inevitable outcome when students experience a sense that they are victims of the imposition of alienating experiences and ideas. Could it be that in labeling it 'resistance' we merely blame the victim for not accepting our received wisdom? 'The challenge of pedagogy would appear to be to enable students to move from taken-for-granted ways of knowing and acting on reality to critical and empowered ways of knowing and acting without inducing this kind of fear and resistance. While I would not argue that such deep change can be painless, I believe that fostering a truly connected and safe environment can go a long way toward alleviating this distress. It is quite unclear to me still, however, to what extent my role as a male, my role as a critical theorist, my role as a professor and evaluator, and my role as an individual who feels quite empowered - often in an assertive male sense - might militate against my

efforts to create a successful, trusting climate for a group of women who may feel quite disempowered and quite unwilling to take risks with me, particularly in the span of a short summer course in which the opportunity either for deep reflection or for the building of intense relationships is severely limited.

July 12 - 'Alienation' or 'Anti-intellectualism'?

Acting on impulse I brought copies of Freire's (1986) brief chapter entitled The act of study into both classes. I frequently use this piece in undergraduate and graduate classes because it presents in unequivocal - though arguably dense - terms the necessity for critical construction of meaning to true understanding of text. In the preservice class we had an exhilirating discussion, including a talk circle, discussion in small groups, and a sharing session in which we examined implications not only for our study habits, but for teaching in general. When I took the same piece into my class of teachers, the reaction was quite different, as my journal comments indicate:

> Talk about night and day. Most of them studied it incredibly superficially. ...Amazingly, despite Freire's insistence in the piece that we all reread difficult text to decode it, none of this group felt that this was necessary. They simply castigated him for obtuse language.They likewise castigated Duckworth [assigned

> text] , though admitting that she was more accessible. I think Duckworth's 'human face' [i.e., telling stories from her personal experience] appealed to them. They complained about it [Freire] being wordy and complained about having to read the piece more than once. Consequently it was impossible to do a serious text analysis, though I did model one for them at the end...They did agree however that the main message was that learning ought not to be passive, that it must build on experience, and that you have to read critically. In talking about their own experiences it was obvious that they have been schooled very didactically...Some students admitted that they literally know no other way to study a text like this since their whole experience has been based on rote learning and memorization.

This commentary is revealing in two respects. First - and this is puzzling to me - while my journal notes suggest that I tended to blame the students for not living up to my expectations, my notes also contain a clear indication that I had grasped at some level what their difficulty was. My comment earlier that they were "seeking practical things" and my note here that they preferred the Duckworth text because they could connect to it in some relational way, clearly suggest that I heard their alienation and plea for connection ... yet, as the narrative will show, I responded to it by increasing the pressure for some kind of intellectual engagement. Considered from a Freirean perspective, it would appear that these

students were currently too immersed in their reality to be able to step back from it to critique it or to imagine other possibilities. Yet, instead ofworking to codify their experiences - or to elicit their current codifications of reality - I insisted on a discourse in the abstract domain. This has not often been an issue in my teaching. Preservice teachers, graduate or undergraduate, customarily operate in the abstract discourse that is the norm in university courses. While some undergraduates may encounter some initial difficulty in detaching themselves from the pull of their own autobiographical and historical stories, most learn to play our game and they engage us in academic discourse on our own terms. They take us on faith and build up intellectual visions of possibility without too much difficulty. The excruciating problem for preservice teachers, in my experience, is turning these abstract idealizations into concrete, owned visions of reality. For practising teachers, such as the students in my class, however, the problem is different. These students know reality, and they have received very systematic socialization into schooling the way it is. To enable such students to engage their reality, it would seem essential to begin by allowing them to tell their stories so that that reality might become available for contextualization and examination. My blindness to this problem, despite my intellectual awareness of its presence, was to become even more evident the next day.

July 13 - Codifications and missed opportunities

Today I asked both groups simply to "draw the process of learning." My commentary on what happened in both classes is as revealing of my pedagogical expectations as of students' stances. With respect to the preservice class I wrote as follows in my journal:

> I was not disappointed. They came up with a wide-ranging set of interesting abstract conceptualizations of the nature of the process...

The pictures that they drew, that pleased me so much, included sets of interacting circles depicting the interactive and shared nature of the process; circles of equal size depicting a desire to illustrate teacher and students in equal relationhips; and a variety of devices to indicate both the multi-directional flow of communication within the classroom and the interacting relationship between school, home and community. As I noted in my recent restorying of this event in my journal, why should these students have difficulty with producing an abstract intellectualization of the process since this is precisely what college eduction does best? Abstractions, while they may be codifications of reality, are also simplifications of reality, and these students could produce such simplifications on demand. Here is what happend in my teacher class:

> I was somewhat apprehensive taking this assignment into [the teacher class]. When I went in they said they were

> discussing their biographies before I arrived and it was fun, and perhaps they should do it for the whole class period, that it would be more fun than talking about Duckworth. I really have to grapple with this issue - the choice between what they see as their needs and my desire to promote a certain kind of intellectualism and critical consciousness. Anyway, I plunged ahead and gave the assignment. I was chagrined. Virtually all of them drew extremely concrete representations of classrooms, with the focus on concrete details [e.g., seating arrangements, teacher's desk etc.]. No abstract circles and arrows here. However, to my surprise, they were all happy to go up to the blackboard to illustrate what their drawings meant and this turned out to be a very productive and very emotionally releasing session for the women. The first student up... drew a traditional didactic classroom seating arrangement, said that that was <u>out</u>, and then drew an interactive seating arrangement - very literal with learning centers etc. Her explication was that it was necessary for children to share and talk in order to get new ideas.... When the next student up completed a similar sketch one student suggested adding a "time-out" corner. This provoked an interesting digression into motivation and discipline, which I eventually curtailed.

Describing this sequence of events is embarrassing for me. I closed off an important opportunity for autobiographical sharing; I presented a task while holding a clear set of predetermined expectations as to what

constituted a good outcome; and I effectively silenced students who "digressed" from the task and, in doing so, missed an opportunity to problematize students' everyday, taken-for-granted experience, and thus make it concretely available as an object of critical reflection. Discussing this in my recent commentary on my initial journal, I summarized my failure as follows:

> The amazing thing is that they developed an extremely rich codification, complete with contradictions and problematics, and although our discussion of it was productive enough, I never fully grasped the significance of their accomplishment, and consequently I couldn't capitalize on it. I talked about their digression into motivation and discipline... wasn't I really sitting in judgment on their utterances?

Thinking back from my current way of thinking about pedagogy, it is difficult for me to understand how I could have been so narrowly focused as to fail to capitalize on the emergent curriculum the students made available to me. To make matters worse, I clearly recognized the opportunity that had beeen presented to me, and even took credit for some of its success. My journal entry for that day concludes:

> Two major outcomes occurred today: (1) For the first time I feel I finally allowed a group of teachers to develop a generative theme. This stuff was real for these teachers. They were emotionally involved, they were vulnerable, very mutually supportive , and they were

> trying to express a painful segment of their lived reality - and largely doing it for themselves! (2) I feel that classroom communication evolved to the point that it became obvious that we were collaborators. As I worked with them - and for the most part held back - I finally felt that they and I genuinely saw that we were working together to understand a complex reality. ...It also became obvious to me that inservice teachers need long-term education that is emotionally as well as intellectually supportive. These women had no idea what I meant on the syllabus by the term 'knower', never mind coming to think of themsleves or their students as people with a capacity to know, create and construct knowledge.

As I look back now, I feel that my failure here can be ascribed to my insensitivity to the biographical and historical contexts of these students' lives. Of course pedagogy is a dialectical relationship and I believe that the problem was not so much that I chose to ignore students' biographies, but that I encountered in my students individually, and in their intergroup relations, emotions, feelings, needs and perspectives that I was poorly prepared to deal with at that time.

July 19 - 'Expressing agency' or 'Disrupting the class'?

The harmony of the group was disrupted again today as three students took the initiative and spent an hour arguing with me over the assignments, the ambiguity of the course etc. This time my patience ran out:

> I got fed up and asserted that they were simply trying to evade their repsonsibilities with respect to the work. ____ demanded that I tell them exactly what they had to read for every class. She needs total direction. ____ [another student] surprises me more since her autobiography indicates that she is learning-oriented and self-directed. They couldn't get me to budge on assignment #3 so they attacked #4. I got mad. I refused to back down, and I told them I resented them wasting the class's time. I said I doubted that everybody agreed, and indeed many of the others later told me that they were perfectly happy with things as they are. That shut them up.

The first thing of note, here, of course, is the intensity and emotional tone of my feelings. This in part reflects my sense of frustration that a small group of students appeared to be intent on sabotaging the class, though it could reflect a deep need in my teaching for harmonious inter-group relations. I have become very conscious of my own discomfort in situations of overt conflict and this need seems to underlie my emotional reaction here. Second, the dominance of a small vocal group of students proved quite intimidating to the other students in the class. It is instructive that fellow-students can play a role in facilitating connectedness or in enforcing silence in a classroom. I feel that my best efforts at promoting connectedness were negated by the fearful atmosphere that resulted from the continuous arguing and complaining that occurred. Later, I conferenced

privately with two of the students who led the protests, and having explained how I thought they could channel their leadership initiative more productively, thereafter they made a positive effort to foster dialogue and connectedness in the class. Of course this event, too, is subject to multiple interpretations, and I often wonder how much the complaints were manifestations of a desire by students who felt essentially powerless or silenced to grab hold of their reality. Could it be that because I was a male teacher and authority figure they could find no other way to oppose my domination except through protest? Did I fail to recognize their need to be heard? Clearly, my earlier failure to create the kind of emergent curriculum I was groping toward, did not help. Indeed the students' frustration could have been magnified because I offered so much, yet, perhaps delivered so little.

July 19-24 - 'Teacher as intellectual?'

During subsequent classes six students talked without hesitation, two contributed modestly, and another three talked very little except when we engaged in small-group or paired discussions. Persistent themes in the conversation were a fairly pervasive sense of lack of agency; a general anxiety about the ambiguity of our classroom process, referred to by one student as "unstructured stuff"; and a degree of concreteness that, to me,

was quite unexpected. Trying to take stock on July 19, I wrote:

> Anyway, what to make of all this? It is very hard to be definitive. I don't know what to think. Most of the discussion in this classroom is extremely concrete. They rarely talk in principle, but go from anecdote to anecdote, often in tangents. Can't they ever talk in principle? If they are not intellectuals, how can their students be? Am I helping them by allowing them therapeutically to set and pursue an agenda that is 'soft and slow' - or should I try to pull them toward the intellectual domain more?.... Where does imposition begin? When are they really learning?

Later, during a session in which students engaged in reciprocal teaching activities, I experienced great frustration with their intellectual processes. One student, for instance, dismissed one whole book because she disagreed with a single minute detail of the text. I also found their unwillingness or inability to think in anything except anecdotal terms frustrating, as well as their unwillingness or inability to consider alternate possibilities. I wrote as follows on July 20:

> [During a discussion of testing in schools] ___ and ___ [another student] went on with an interminable series of anecdotes about what tests have done in schools - long, detailed expositions whose relevance to the topic was entirely unclear. How can one differentiate this stuff from 'voice'? Is this therapeutic? Should I encourage any kind of sharing? How does one intellectualize and direct people without silencing or imposing?

Again, these are issues which can be explored from multiple perspectives. For one thing, my inability to acknowledge or develop codifications at the outset, as well as my persistent valuing of intellectualization over ownership and sharing of ideas, clearly diminished my opportunities for affirming ideas that might have led to greater critical examination of the teachers' existing understandings of epistemology, agency and schooling. On the other hand, some of these students seemed to have real intellectual difficulty in experiencing or expressing what Berlak (1988) refers to as empathy and outrage. I believe part of this was because some of the students had come from teaching postions which had left them with symptoms of severe disempowerment and burnout. These students seemed to have a real need to use the class for therapeutic purposes and thus set up a discourse which allowed them to vent some of their painful memories and anguish about their roles. This, and the frequent conflicts in the class, may have caused others to hold back, fearful of the emotional turmoil that was liable to spill forth at any moment.

Of course, in analyzing why it was not possible to accomodate the class effectively to the needs of either group, one has to look also at institutional constraints. In this case the mandatory nature of the course, the required syllabus constraints, the accelerated summer schedule of daily class meetings, as well as the timing of the class, at a time when

both the teachers and I were fatigued, all contributed to the difficulty of making this into a comfortable, shared forum with both therapeutic and intellectual possibilities.. Add to this the oppressive physical environment, and the obstacles were formidable. By contrast, my colleague Janet Miller and I have begun teaching a Summer Institute for Teachers at Hofstra University. Our institute meets all-day long for one week in a luxurious setting with all meals provided. We have no agenda except the notion that teachers be provided a safe and comfortable environment in which to reflect on their practice in a collaborative and connected environment. Under those circumstances, we have had considerable success in enabling students to tell their stories and to begin to view issues of epistemology, pedagogy and agency as problematic.,

July 21 - 'Biographical insights'

After two weeks I collected their journals and made notes in my journal. In reading the journals I was particularly interested in references to personal agency, to notions of epistemology, and to reflection on the events that occurred in our classroom. In what follows, individual student's journals are referred to by randomly assigned numbers to preserve anonymity.

#1 - She wrote only five entries in two weeks, and complains about many of the ideas we discuss being too idealistic: "A

teacher cannot always be overly creative". She says that she is still primarily influenced by her parents. With respect to study habits, and my expectations in that regard, she says: "I can't examine things too deeply". She found the Freire piece that we read "a little too profound". She also complained about the students who bellyached so much, saying that they will make very poor role models of the learning process for their students.

#2 - An extremely disjointed journal, with no narrative stream. Much of it filled with fact from the texts, but without interpretation or elaboration. Seems totally preoccupied with self, and with seeing the world as it is, without any evidence of self-questioning or inquiry.

#3 - Another student who expresses frustration with the continual griping in the class. Her journal has meticulous notes and questions on issues from the reading that she found of particular interest. My impression was that she sounded quite apologetic for herself as a learner. She admits to being confused and pointed out that <u>the real problem with summer school is that you don't have time to be confused.</u>

#4 - I found this journal wonderfully satisfying. She reads intelligently and her journal shows a constant preoccupation with examining the ideas she reads in juxtapositon with her experience as a teacher. She shows a deep sense of <u>caring</u>. I was deeply puzzled about the discrpeancy between the person I encountered in the journal and the other side of that person

I encountered in class when she played the role of one of the principal complainers. She obviously sensed my frustration with her and wrote a journal entry inquiring if I disliked her. This led to a productive conference after which she and another student offered to intervene to try to make our classroom dynamics more positive.

#5 - Another enigma. From her journal I can tell that this student is reading conscientiously, that she is reacting critically to the material read, and that she is raising lots of good questions... yet she is persistently silent in class. The only clue to this is her statement that she usually remains silent until she feels 'comfortable'. What is the source of her discomfort?

#6 - I called this a 'work-a-day journal', with few startling insights. This student did however explain that she has had a long history of exposure to didactic modes of teaching. She explained further, that she has a very negative attitude to teaching some subjects, and that she has writing phobia.

#7 - This student chose to comment on how some of her classmates reacted to my syllabus: "Was there a reason for the syllabus being presented this way? It certainly had a profound effect on the students in this class. It made them crazy. It didn't bother me much. My attitude was 'let's give this guy a chance'. I think the reason most of the people in the class were crazy is that we're so used to being <u>told</u> what to do and how to do it, and a little bit of uncertainty threw them into

a tizzy." However, despite these sentiments, this student's journal was quite short and despite having considerable background in process approaches to learning, she chose to share very little of her expertise in class. I wonder why?

8 This student's journal, too, was filled with rich insights, yet she shared very little of these in class. Because of this, I was quite surprised at the depth of her thinking upon reading her journal. She, too, commented on the reaction of her fellow students to my syllabus:"I think it's a bit scary that the behavior of the teachers [in our class] was no different than [that of] the children of today: 'Why do we need to do all this work? Why do we need to learn? We don't have the time to complete the work because we have a life after school' My students told me the same things. (here she quotes her students expressing similar sentiments). Our priorities are a bit mixed up. What happened to 'hard work leads to a better mind'?" This student wrote an extensive analysis of the class and went on to argue that my type of course may be intrinsically unsuited to summer school because the compressed schedule leaves little time for reflection.

#9 - Much of this student's journal was taken up with expressions of frustration with the class and with her perception that I was hostile to her. This peception was not entirely inaccurate since she was one of the ringleaders of what I oftentimes considered to be a conspiracy to thwart my goals and sabotage the course. I conferenced with her, too, after reading her journal, and she, also, agreed to attempt to play

a constructive role and use her leadership as a catalyst for constructive discussion in the classroom. Coming from a long history of didactic education, and feeling very nervous about any kind of ambiguity because of her grade anxiety, this student found the class particularly stressful, and this stress was evident in her journaling.

#10 -This student experienced considerable difficulty with the class because, as a result of her teaching experiences, she had espoused considerable negative expectations about parents, teachers, administrators and children, and she held these views quite dogmatically. She used her journal as a vehicle to reiterate her views rather than as a place in which to reflect on and examine her views.

#11 - Commenting on the syllabus on the second day of class, this student wrote: "I also feel we skirted an important issue - grades. While I agree with M O'L that I want to get a lot out of this experience I also have to deal with the reality of a grading system. That's why I feel unsteady about this course's expectations. I'm used to being given the assignments, clear parameters, and then I know how to handle it. That is how the game is usually played and I always do well... I have to admit that I was relieved when he finally agreed to give us an assignment for tonight. I wonder why he was so reluctant to commit for an assignment. I wonder if he really feels secure being 'the teacher' in our group. He seems to want to be one of us." This student wrote extensively about the classroom dynamics and the degree to

> which I practised what I preached. She wrote in detail, for example, about how she looked to see if I really meant that more than one right answer was acceptable before she took the risk of offering an opinion. She also recognized the conflict that arose as some students began to use the class for therapeutic purposes, while others were uncomfortable with this. She empathized wtih my role: "Poor M is in the middle still trying his best to meet each person's individual needs. - not easy to do. For me the class has given me the opportunity to see myself as I was 15 years ago as well as today. Before, I searched for quick 'how to' answers. Now I'm more concerned with asking the right questions - I think that is what M meant when he said that you need to know what you want to accomplish ('the ends') before you can find 'the means'.

The final weeks - 'Signs of positive outcomes . . . yet, still more questions'

Some significant changes in classroom dynamics occurred during the last two weeks of class, although, due to a variety of intersecting factors, it is unclear precisely what precipitated the change. For my part, in the course of writing to students in response to their journals, I had issued a specific invitation to four relatively silent students, inviting them to share more of their thoughtful reflections, autobiographical experiences and questions during our classroom discussions. I had likewise counselled three students to adopt a more listening and inclusive attitude so that

other students' voices would not be drowned out. Furthermore, I had enlisted the cooperation of two of the students who had been most voiciferous in complaining about the class, and for the remainder of our class meetings they played a constructive role in initiating and maintaining a positive, dialogical atmosphere in the classroom. Perhaps most important of all, after reading their journals I had gained a good sense of what kinds of biographical, epistemological, pedagogical and empowerment issues were most pressing for each of the students, and to what degree they were gaining ownership over the issues that we were examining in class. As a result, I now had a strong sense of which issues were important to the group, and I also knew which students had given these issues thought. I was therefore able to invite them to share their experiences and expertise when I felt that their input would be particularly valuable. As a result we had an animated discussion pertaining to issues of trust and risk-taking in pedagogy during our class on July 24.

Whether by coincidence or not, what I chose to call in my journal the 'turning point' for the class came on July 25, a day in which the agenda for the class was discussion of the Connected teaching chapter from Belenky et al's Women's ways of knowing. The discussion did not begin in a very promising tone, but it soon improved:

> I thought we were off to a very poor start when I asked if anyone had strong feelings either way about Belenky

> and nobody had! However, these people are starting to catch on. They all merely agreed at first that it reiterated Barnes and Duckworth [i.e., our assigned texts]. Talk about closed! People started with gentle encouragement and with me interrupting _____ and _____ [another student] whenver they gyrated too much into the realm of anecdotes...

There followed a prolonged and vigorous discussion of the issues raised by Belenky et al, and particularly of the meaning of the notion of teaching as nurturing. Many students who had contributed relatively little up to now made substantive contributions to the discussion. My exhiliration could not be contained, as these comments in my journal reveal:

> What can I say? The commentary [i.e., in my journal] tells its own story. It looks like we finally engaged in the collaborative making of meaning. What a journey!! The students finally seem oriented to raising questions and helping each other generate interesting answers.

This trend continued on July 26, when the topic was the problematization of the idea that extrinsic rewards are necessary in order to cause students to learn. I noted in my journal that a very notable shift occurred in the group dynamics of the class today. The students showed real initiative in getting into groups, and I noticed that they formed groups so that those students who had earlier focused the discourse around what

might be called their own therapeutic needs, were isolated from the others. I commented in my journal that with the exception of the latter students, who seemed to still be burdened by painful memories of their own negative experiences with teaching, the remainder of the class "has become very tranquil and collaboratively task-oriented." When one of the latter students introduced an example from her own teaching to convince the group that behavior modification and extrinsic rewards are necessary for dealing with 'troublemakers', the others responded very assertively indeed:

> Just about everyone turned on her then, and started explaining what was wrong with her approach. _____ practically yelled at her that she was burned out and needed help.

The remaining class periods were devoted to group "presentations" by the students of the results their collaborative inquiries into the topics they had chosen to research under my guidance in order to meet the requirements for the fifth assignment on the syllabus [see Appendix I]. The pedagogical experiences that the students provided for their colleagues were the usual hands-on type of interactive pedagogical experiences that my graduate students generally produce on such occasions, and they were generally successful. I will not describe these here, but I will present a brief account of an incident that occurred on July 27, during a student-led

discussion of issues to do with gender equity in the classroom. The story I will relate provides insights into the progress we had made in our classroom in creating a climate that was safe enough for deeply personal self-disclosure, and it also provides some clues to the deeply painful autobiographical experiences that at least some of these students carried with them to the clasroom. My telescoped journal notes of the event provdie sufficient witness [Students are identified here by another set of randomly assigned numbers in order to preserve anonymity]:

> Much was revealed however when __1__ spoke. To begin with, she stated that 'boys are like animals, while girls ar not aggressive'. As the discussion progressed __2__ shifted the topic to the general issue of gender inequities, and explained how, when she resumed work and cmae back to school, she had to apologize to her whole family because now some of the chores would be done by hired help!She said... that equality is now translated into two jobs for women.__1____, picking up on this in a great rush of passion, tried to articulate her own powerlessness, anger and frustration. She said that women work so hard and get so bitter because of unequal treatment.... that they no longer feel like women, THEY'RE ITS... She concluded.. "Women have been stepped on. Women live in fear."

I have edited my notes considerably to provide as much privacy as possible, though I should note that a number of other students joined in and shared

similar stories of victimization. 1's disclosure was quite cathartic for her and it touched a deep nerve in all of the women. They seemed deeply empathic, but they also seemed quite anxious and uncomfortable at the disclosure. I was sitting off to the side of the circle, since two of the students were leading the discussion. I too felt uncomfortable, primarily because I felt a terrible sense of shame and anger at the way that these women had been victimized by the inequities in power relations between males and females in our society. The situation resolved itself as follows:

> Her statement touched a nerve, perhaps of sympathy, and also fear and discomfort at what was being revealed. Everybody started speaking at once. What an experience!!! _____ [student leading discussion] tried to stop the discussion, saying that we had veered off the topic, and also that 1 had gone too much into her personal life. I interrupted to say that if 1 wanted to speak about it, perhaps she should, and that it was pertinent to school issues, since it reflected the home reality of many children...

The rest of the class discussion that day was quite anticlimactic and subdued. Looking back on these disclosures, it is very apparent to me that until students have the opportunity to exhume the deep and often painful memories that are so fundamental to their being, dealing with issues such as voice, empowerment and critical reflection on an intellectual level is clearly futile and alienating. These issues would seem to operate at a level

even more fundamental than the generative themes and codifications of experience examined earlier. Unless a climate of deep trust and safety is created, will students be able to exhume and articulate these painful experiences? Is it reasonable, in any circumstances, to expect that most women, themselves victims of a patriarchal system of domination, will be able to engage in such self-revelation in a classroom in which the proceedings are adjudicated by a male teacher? Is it reasonable to expect that this kind of climate can ever be fostered under contextual constraints such as the ones (delineated earlier) under which this course operated during the summer of 1989? If the statements and reactions of the women who participated in this course are to be heard, doesn't it suggest a fundamental rethinking of the rationale underlying the entire essence of most teacher education and staff development programs?

At the time I wrote my journal I described the nature of our parting at the conclusion of our last class on August 2 as an enigma. To be more precise, I now realize that I felt frustrated and disappointed that we ended on what I interpreted to be a low note. During that last day the final student presentation occupied the first hour, and the course then concluded as follows:

> I then asked for feedback on the course or discussion on any other topic, since we had an hour left. Silence!! It was extremely difficult.While a few students came and

> thanked me at the end, most seemed to feel the kind of uneasiness they had experienced the first day. It was embarrassing. I got no cohesive discussion going and we quit twenty minutes early.

For me this ending was anti-climactic, and I felt at the time that it was symbolic of my failure to engender effective intergroup relations and critical inquiry among the teachers. I felt frustrated and disappointed that students had not met my expectations, and responded to my invitations. Up until this point in the current narrative, in fact, I have continued to construe the outcomes of the course as ambiguous at best. Now, however, thinking about the outcomes from my students' perspectives, rather than from my own egocentric perspective, I believe that the course may have had many positive outcomes indeed, despite the contextual constraints within which the course was offered and notwithstanding my own pedagogical insensitivities. The reader may wish to suspend judgment on this issue until the teachers' final perspectives on the course are presented below.

It is rather magnanimous of me to revise my opinion of the students 'learning. Yet, in August 1989 I turned in four 'A' grades, two 'A-' grades, four 'B+' grades, and one 'B' grade on my final grade sheet and these grades became part of each student's permanent academic record. I graded the students as conscientiously as possible, and, as I recall it, I felt that I

was being generous in giving the grades I gave to some students since I felt that I did not have much evidence that they had engaged in serious intellectual engagement with the issues presented in the course. I am not at all sure how I would address the issue of grading if I had to regrade the students now, but my grade assignments seem, in retrospect, like crude and arbitrary judgments. The issue of grading highlights some serious contradictions in my teaching as well as in any attempt to teach in a liberatory manner while leaving the fundamental power relations of the institutions within which we work undisturbed. Is there not a fundamental contradiction between the notion of a safe, democratic classroom in which student voice is valued and encouraged and the notion that the teacher will simultaneously sit in judgment on any utterance the student makes? Did I not serve merely to try to conceal this distinction by telling students not to worry about grades while they and I knew full well that I retained authority to grade them on a scale from 'A' to 'F', with pluses and minuses available to help refine my judgments? I frequently expressed frustration in my journal that students were so concerned about my expectations for them and so anxious about getting good grades - yet, were these students not struggling to deal with a reality that I simply refused to recognize? Were they not more aware of the intrinsic contradiction between my stated value on student voice and the construction of knowledge and their

certain knowledge that I had the power , the authority and even the institutional obligation to evaluate their performance with letter grades? By refusing to address this issue I created the illusion of egalitarianism and learning for learning's sake while causing students to play along with my fiction. After all, if the emperor says he has new clothes, then he has new clothes! So be it.

I am not convinced, however, that presenting a clear and unambiguous grading policy is the answer to this dilemma. I have found that when I do so, students merely learn to play the game better. If we all acknowledge and acquiesce to existing power relations, then the mission of liberatory education is negated. It is unclear to me, therefore, if it is ever possible for teaching to be nonhierarchical and nonimpositional. Is it possible, for example, to operate within institutional norms that say that we must grade our students in a manner that discriminates among them, yet create a genuinely democratic environment in which students learn for learning's sake? If grading were eliminated, would it be possible to construe teaching as a nonhierarchical and nonauthoritarian process? In view of the obligations and power vested in teachers, this too seems unlikely. Perhaps the most we can do is become sufficiently self-reflexive about our own role in the power relations of the institutions in which we work that we can work to enable our students to engage in the same kind of

self-reflexivity. For those of us who work in teacher education and who are interested in "education as the practice of freedom", to use Freire's term, this would seem to be essential.

Stories and narrative II: The teachers' voices

What follows are extracts from students' journals, and from their final evaluations illustrating what they thought about the course. A letter was sent to the eleven students in September 1990 asking for their current assessment of both the positive and negative aspects of the course. As of this writing [October 1990], four have replied, and though they were offered a choice of responding anonymously, none of these four exercised that option. In what follows, students have again been assigned random identification numbers to protect identities. I have tried to minimize my editorial role in selecting the comments to be quoted, and all comments are presented without comment to preserve the integrity of students' original voices. Note, only ten students are represented below as I have been unable to retrieve comments or evaluations by the remaining student.

#1 - I expected a lecture format mixed with goup participation. But I wouldn't have been able to make the personal growth and gains that I feel I made if the clas were conducted in that traditional manner. I would have compared and contrasted a transmission and integration model of teaching

- but I would never have made the personal changes I have made. The knowledge would have remained 'school knowledge' - not applicable to the real world.Don't change the course too much M - it was hard but well worth the effort... [offering feedback] try not to be so flexible (it made a lot of people nervous)... say less about each assignment but be more specific... you have certainly shifted my focus just enough that tbe big picture is clearer [8/2/89].

#2 - I enjoyed the class, especially M's laid back way of teaching. However, I didn't like how each class was used as a therapy session, and how it got very redundant after a while. I think M's ideas about how to teach are great, but I also think he pushes them a little too much. For example, I feel our class was a little resistant with the ideas and we should have discussed them more. Actually we discussed them a lot - what I meant is our class was not 100% accepting of these ideas and M got very frustrated instead of truly understanding why we had problems with the new ideas. I do feel I've grown in this class because I have a new attitude to teaching... I really learned a lot in the last few weeks. I am excited to become a teacher and put these ideas into practice. I really will try to have an open mind concerning the ideas M taught us [8/2/89].

#3 - I have learned a lot from having taken this course. I feel as if I have gone through some serious consciousness raising... I am now better able to verbalize my philosophy of teaching... I learned a lot about myself. I have been

able to clarify and refine my own ideas about teaching and learning [8/2/89].

#4 - I liked the way you ran it - from generalities and theories to specifics. Your choice of books was good for the entire class... each of us liked a different book..... I can't be negative about your course except too much discussion about assignments. I think this was the 'personality' of the class... Take care and don't change too much of the way you conduct the class and allow the students to learn. We students are sometimes afraid of teachers , such as you, who allow us to explore and know our full selves [8/2/89].

[The entry begins with the student reacting to a comment in my letter soliciting feedback] I am sorry to hear you felt we dind't 'meld'. But don't you think that was good in many ways? The divergence of opinion on the subjects we discussed and shared was wonderful.It was not a 'calming' class. We were not tranquil at all. I learned a great deal about motivating children and about the curiosity that lies buried beneath the complexities of their lives. (Sometimes I even disliked the ladies, but in the end I grew to respect and like most of them)... the long and the short of the success of any class is the motivation of students to learn and the presentation of subjects so each individual can benefit. You did good as far as 'benefits' I received...Your class made a difference in my thoughts and I thank you even if I didn't get an A++ [9/90].

#5 - It is not easy for me to participate. I thought I ws doing fine until now. When I talk in front of the class my heart palpitates and I can't help but feel as though I'm being judged. Trust takes a long time to build... trust cannot be built in 14 days. Nevertheless I do feel better in this kind of class setting, and that is why I can participate a little every day. You may not realize it but you have helped me to think about teaching in a different way. There are many other students in the class who would agree with me [7/2/89].

I could be reading you wrong but I could see/feel your frustration with the class. Did what you read in the journals change you that much? You said what you read in the journals helped you but it seems that you've lost your enthusiasm (motivation). Or do you expect more participation from us? Maybe there are others in the class who feel anxious like me or could not build trust in such a short time. Maybe there are other forces such as weather? The personality of certain class members? Don't change anything about your style/approach. Try it again in the Fall. I really think it will make a difference.[Note, this student also wrote a long empathic note with respect to an illness in my family and asked if this too might be a factor...I now find that I never mentioned this factor in my journal and I too wonder...] [8/2/89].

My last graduate course was seven years ago at ____ College and I was thoroughly disgusted with the academic program...

After a few years of soul searching.. I realized that I had made a mistake and should return as soon as possible. Of course, the first course I took was during the summer, and it just happened to be your class. One of my first problems about this class was that I was not ready for an 'open discussion' type of class. It scared the daylights out of me. It had nothing to do with you, it was the fear of returning after several years and starting from scratch... I was afraid to say anything becaused I was sure I'd be wrong.If I had the chance to take your class again, you would find a different person. I'm not short on words, and I speak my mind often. The seond problem was that the class was given during the wrong session. Your classes should be given during the fall or spring term because you make your students think. I didn't become comfortable until the last week of class. (All my papers were done and I had SURVIVED!!!). I know that doesn't make you feel terrific; however, everything that went on in the class was time-released within me. I continued to think about what was discussed in class over the next few months. The more I thought about it the more it made sense. I was a relatively quiet, 'don't rock the boat' teacher. I always did whatever the principal said without questioning.... To make a long story short, I had a child in my class this year who was being sexually abused. I told the principal about it; she wanted me to bury it and forget that it existed. The old me would have listened; the new me went over her head. I stirred up enough people to make them stop and look into the situation... If we don't question what is going on, nothing

will change [9/90].

#6 - The condensed term did not lend itself to such thought-provoking reading... M, your philosophies and desires help to remind me of the person I could be - not the robot the Administration would like me to be. I thank you for that. I am going to try to be idealistic and more hopeful than I have been. I feel recharged and ready to tackle the world again. ...This course did allow me the flexibility to deal with some areas that were troubling me. It was good therapy. [8/2/89].

It was a very unusual class, different from any I have ever experienced. As a more mature member of the class I resented the time certain students spent discussing how much work they were prepared not to do.It was boring and egocentric. I realize I brought my own problems to that class as well. I guess psychology lends itself to self-evaluation. I remember you stresing how we, the students, should take more ownership in deciding the curriculum of the course. M, I would have liked to hear more of your expertise. I write my checks to Hofstra believing that it will provide me with instructors that will present their points of view - knowledge they have acquired - and a chance to journey with them through their fields of inquiry. ... either present a new idea, road to follow, concept, or give me the chalk and I will teach the course. It is not negative (in my opinion) for you to be yourself and to toot your own horn. I never got a true feeling of who you were and what you stood for. It was our

loss.... M, when you open too many doors to too many options too fast, sometimes the passengers fall out... I hope you are not offended by my statements. My degree has been a painful experience for me - I question what I gained at the price of $8,000. ... I feel the need to continue to grow, yet I do not know what direction to go to... [9/90]

#7 - I ended up learning a lot about myself and my own teaching... I think most of all I learned the importance of being open to growth and change and new ideas - not bad for a three and a half weeks course! The best thing about the course was the open dialogue - the way we did most of the talking and discussing and I didn't feel like we weren't supposed to respond. The negative parts were all that wasted time at the beginning. I think it was just that we really didn't understand what you wanted with the last assignment, so maybe you could find a better way to explain that... I'd have to say that I would recommend this class to others because it really affected me on my thinking/ belief system level - and that affects your teaching on a deeper, more subtle level. [8/2/89].

#8 - I have become aware of what a teacher's work really is. M appeared to be a very laid back person who only wanted you to benefit from his class... informal class discussion enabled us to open up to one another. M established a communication system that allowed us to agree and - more importantly - disagree... I loved the textbooks... Speaking of assignments, I cannot understand the complaining that

took place three weeks ago. Honestly, when I read the assignment descriptions I was thrilled. Do you know how many times I am asked 'who influenced you to become a teacher?' or 'What is your philosophy of teaching?'... OK, M, there were some irritating points to mention, and you are not to blame! I believe that some of the students in the class should have stopped controlling the class with their personal problems. I believe it only tuned most of us out and as a result became very annoyed. Anxiety was definitely the problem. And I am usually the one to get worried. The only reason I didn't is because you were not [8/2/89].

#10 - In retrospect our class experience has made a difference in my life. I really feel that I got some worthwhile and beneficial things out of it. And I have to admit, my feelings have changed over time. I was often frustrated in class myself. It was an odd situation to be in. At times I felt it was more of an encounter group or therapy session - or even a self-discovery course for teachers - than it was a child development course. At the time it was very trying and scholastically frustrating - but as I think about it now, many good things stand out...The class was an eye opener. I learned to think about things from different viewpoints. I appreciated what you tried to do with the course and I think we at least got the gist of your intentions... Overall I think the class was rather atypical of my experience of courses at Hofstra, however, it has affected me positively in the long run [9/90].

POSTSCRIPT

As I finish this story I feel the urge to begin retelling it. In the first telling of this story, recorded in my journal in summer 1989, I recorded deep frustration with the pedagogical difficulties I encountered. My tendency was to blame the students since I felt that I was doing my best. In my second retelling, which occurred in summer 1990, when I wrote a reflective journal based on my rereeading of all of the archival material from the class, I no longer felt the same frustration. Instead, I began to detect some of the many ambiguities and contradictions that were present in the dynamics of the classroom. I began this as a journal which intended to lay out and theorize about these pedagogical dilemmas. Perhaps I accomplished that. In the process, though, I have come to develop a deep empathy for the lived experiences of my student's lives and a new sense of humility about the privilege I had in working with sentient, struggling beings, striving to attain wholeness. I think, perhaps, that the story now bears retelling from the teachers' own perspectives. As a first step towards generating the data that might yield such a retelling, I will mail this manuscript to all of the students in the class, and invite them to further dialogue. Not only would I like to hear these teachers tell me about this story, but I would love to see them use this dialogue as an opportunity

to begin constructing and reconstructing their own stories through a similar self-reflexive process of narrative inquiry.

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Appendix I: Syllabus for Advanced Child Development Class

Advanced Child Development for Teachers

ELED 243

Summer 1989

10:30-12:10, Room 014 Phillips

Michael O'Loughlin

118 Mason Hall

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Office Hours: 12:10-1:00, Tu & Th

Required texts

Barnes, D. (1975). From communication to curriculum. Middx. Eng.: Penguin Books,

Duckworth, E. (1987). "The having of wonderful ideas" and other essays on teaching and learning. New York: Teachers College Press.

Stipek, D. (1988). Motivation to learn: From theory to practice. Englewood, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Note: Additional reading material is on reserve in the library, or will be made available in class.

Purpose of class:

Consider the following quotes, both of which are drawn from the Duckworth book that we will read:

> "By teacher I mean someone who engages learners, who seeks to involve each person wholly - mind, sense of self, sense of humor, range of interests, interactions with other people - in learning. And, having engaged the learners, a teacher finds his questions to be the same as those that a researcher into the nature of human learning wants to ask: What do you think and why? While the students learn, the teacher learns too. And it helps if, like Paley (1986), he is curious about the students' thoughts. How do other people really think about these matters? Which ideas build upon which others and how? Which interests build on which other interests? Which ideas get in the way of other ideas? What seem to be in Hawkins's (1979) phrase, the "critical barriers" in this field? How is an idea modified? How does a firmly held conviction influence how a person reads an experience?... What factors keep interest high?... How does a new idea lead to a new question, and vice versa?" (p. 134)
>
> "I am proposing that teaching, understood as engaging learners in phenomena and working to understand the sense they are making, might be the sine qua non of research.
>
> That kind of researcher would be a teacher in the sense of caring about some part of the world and how it works enough to want to make it accessible to others; he or she would be fascinated by the questions of how to engage people in it and and how people make sense of it..." (140).

My goal in this course is to help you address the three central issues

raised above, namely (1) the fact that children are active, constructive knowers who have the power to learn, to know and to understand; (2) that the essential challenge of teaching is to recognize this, and to find ways to engage learners in their own learning; and (3) to be a truly great teacher, a teacher needs to be a researcher, in the sense of having an undying curiosity about the world, about how people make sense of it, and about how to engage them in it.

Format of the course

This is your class. I am here to facilitate your learning. My goal is to create a learning environment that is relevant and meaningful for you. If at any time you find that the course is not meeting your interests, please do not hesitate to discuss this with me. I would like you to view this class as a growth or developmental experience for you. I would like to give you an opportunity to have your own understanding of yourself grow and develop over the period of the course. I will try to structure the assignments and the evaluation system to reflect these values.

The class will be fundamentally dialogical in format, with most of the time devoted to reaction, reflection, discussion, problem posing and critical exploration. Since much of the learning that will happen, will occur during classroom dialogue, it will be very difficult for you to

succeed in the class if (1) you do not come to class prepared or (2) if you miss class. Attendance, evidence of preparation, and willingness to participate actively in class will figure in your final grade.

As I noted earlier, this is your class. I am here to facilitate your learning. I will try to create a non-threatening, supportive atmosphere in which you can reach out and try some new ideas. Don't be afraid to join in and express your views - it is only by taking a risk and trying out your tentative ideas that you will learn and grow. If, however, at any time you feel lost in the class, feel frustrated with with the class structure, feel that you are not learning etc., please be sure to speak with me. I will make any adjustments that I can to enhance your learning experience.

Course schedule

This class represents a new departure for me. Typically, I give out a detailed syllabus of readings and dates at the first class meeting. However, this time I would like to experiment with creating a learning collective. I would like us to set our priorities together with respect to what we should address and when. I have assigned three books, and I have an extensive file of supplementary material that I can make available as your interests become more defined. A general sequence that might work, perhaps would be to begin with the Duckworth book, dealing with the

nature of children's thinking and the importance of intellectualism and "the having of wonderful ideas" in schools; to move on from there to the Barnes book, with its discussion of precisely how to implement a dialogical and intellectual curriculum in schools; to go on then to discuss implications of these ideas for specific subject areas (with you, students, signing up for and reporting on one specific area of interest - e.g., the teaching of reading, writing, math, science etc.); to move on next to the general issue of motivation and our study of the Stipek book; and finally, to leave some time for topics of general interest such as discipline, effects of poverty, racial and gender inequities, effects of stress, effects of standardized testing etc., depending on student interest (again, some students may wish to sign up to address these topics). In all cases, readings will be made available that pose the issues from a developmental and critical perspective.

Assignments

Since we will be making collective decisions about the direction in which we wish the class to go, it would be presumptous of me to dictate the assignments in advance. However, the following represent the kinds of assignments that I believe would be beneficial for you, though the assignments are of course subject to negotiation.

1. Reflective journal

There will be a reading assignment for each class. In order to benefit from the reading and the ensuing class discussion, it is essential that you read prior to class, and that you come to class with a short set of questions or problems to pose, based on your reading. These should be included in your journal each night, with the date and topic written at the top. Your journal is also the place for reflection on the issues that have been raised in class, and indeed, on what is actually happening in class. I would also like to see you use your journal in a genuinely biographical way - reflecting on the implications of the ideas about education that you are hearing for your understanding of your own past as a learner, your present as a learner and teacher, and your future as a learner and teacher. Guidlines on precisely how to keep a journal of this type are in the chapter by Toby Fulwiler, which is on reserve in the library. Please read the Fulwiler paper as soon as possible.

Due date:: I will read your journals periodically throughout the semester.

2. Autobiography of your own learning history

You will reflect on the influences that shaped you into becoming the knower that you are today. What events in your early childhood, in your

elementary and secondary schooling, in your college years, and in your interpersonal relations with others created the vision of yourself as knower that you now hold. Who colored your attitude to achievement? In what way? Who gave you the view of intellectual endeavor that you now hold? How have these influences affected you? How have you responded to counteract negative or discouraging influences? How are these influences reflected in your current ambition to become a teacher? Do a chronological timeline first, then try to pick out major themes across your lifeline, and present the results in a brief biographical essay, due the end of the first week of class. Due date: July 17.

3. Philosophy of teaching biography

For this piece of biographical writing, I would like you to reflect on the forces that influenced you to become a teacher. Be sure to engage particularly with your memories of your actual experience of schooling. Please talk about what teacher's work is, and what you see your mission as a teacher to be. If you are already teaching, or have been, please engage in critical reflection on not only what you do/did every day, but on what the assumptions underlying your actions appear/ed to be. Finally, now that we're well into the course, begin to piece together a personal philosophy of teaching with evidence that you're working at embracing some of the ideas

that have come up in discussion and in the readings and that you are attempting to make them your own. Please present the end result of your reflections in a brief biographical paper which captures what you stand for as a teacher.

Due date: July 24.

4. Critical reflection on book from assigned list

Choose one of the three assigned books. Think about the book, its mesage and the questions it raises for you. Then, please draft up either a brief critical statement indicating precisely why you chose this book, and drawing from the book to illustrate your position, or else present a set of thought-provoking questions that the book raises for you. You may, if you wish, do a combined exercise, in which you do either of these assignemnts across two, or even all three books.

Due date: July 27

5. Exploration of a subject area of your choice

As well as studying the common syllabus, you will be given the opportunity to sign up for an in-depth exploration of a topic of your choice relevant to elementary education and child development. Possible topics

include the teaching of language arts, social studies, math, science, reading, writing etc., and issues such as the effects of stress, poverty, racial and gender inequities etc. on learning and development. Part of your responsibility (working in a team with some others) will be to explore the topic in some depth and then to figure out how to introduce the topic to the other students in the class in some pedagogically interesting way [Lecturing not allowed!!]. I will be available for an in-depth conference with each group, and I will provide you with suggested readings and other advice as necessary. As a final paper, each member of the group will develop a position paper, summarizing the nature and importance of the issue that was explored; explaining what was found out from the research; summarizing the relevance of this information for the practice of teaching; and concluding with a self-assessment of (1) what you gained form doing the research; and (2) what you gained from teaching the material to your colleagues. Your grade will be based on evidence of preparation; effectiveness of classroom activity; and final report.

Due date: August 2.

Please note: Due to the compressed nature of summer schedule, papers are expected on due date.